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THE PROGRAM AND SERVICES OF OUTSTANDING COMMUNITY COLLEGE SERVING A RURAL AREA.

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MODESTO JUNIOR COLLEGE IN CALIFORNIA WAS ORIGINALLY ESTABLISHED TO SERVE THE NEEDS OF RURAL YOUTH. THE CURRICULUM WAS DESIGNED TO EMPHASIZE THE TRANSFER PROGRAMS OF STUDENTS TO FOUR-YEAR COLLEGES. HOWEVER, FOLLOWING WORLD WAR II, THE COLLEGE EXPANDED CURRICULUM OFFERINGS IN THE TWO YEAR TERMINAL AND VOCATIONAL-TECHNICAL AREAS OF EDUCATION, AND TODAY A THIRD PROGRAM GAINING IN IMPORTANCE IS ADULT EDUCATION, IN WHICH SECONDARY AND ELEMENTARY PROGRAMS LEADING TO DIPLOMAS ARE PROVIDED. THE AUTHOR CONCLUDES THAT THE FOLLOWING STATEMENTS CONCERNING THE OPERATION OF JUNIOR COLLEGES ARE TRUE--(1) A JUNIOR COLLEGE SHOULD BE GOVERNED AT THE LOCAL LEVEL, (2) IT SHOULD BE COMPREHENSIVE IN ITS COURSE OFFERINGS, (3) THE JUNIOR COLLEGE SHOULD BE TUITION FREE, (4) STUDENTS SHOULD BE ABLE TO COMMUTE, AND (5) JUNIOR COLLEGES SHOULD BE WILLING TO TAKE ALL HIGH SCHOOL GRADUATES. THIS SPEECH WAS PRESENTED AT THE NATIONAL OUTLOOK CONFERENCE ON RURAL YOUTH, OCTOBER 23, 1967, WASHINGTON, D.C., SPONSORED JOINTLY BY THE U.S. DEPARTMENTS OF AGRICULTURE, HEALTH, EDUCATION, AND WELFARE, INTERIOR, AND LABOR, OEO, AND THE PRESIDENT'S COUNCIL ON YOUTH OPPORTUNITY. (JS)

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THE PROGRAM AND SERVICES OF OUTSTANDING COMMUNITY COLLEGE SERVING A RURAL AREA

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Most States in the Union already have developed to some extent or other a system of public junior colleges. Most of the States which do not have such institutions are in the process of establishing them or are at least giving the matter serious consideration. Each State seems to develop its own unique pattern for the financing, supervision and development of program of its public junior colleges, although it is possible to discern certain national commonalities. I will be speaking this afternoon, however, out of the framework of the California pattern since I will be describing a California institution. Naturally I am a partisan of the California approach but I will concede that there may be alternative patterns which may prove to be almost as effective.

To quote from its most recent catalog, "Modesto Junior College is a two-year community college serving an area of some 4,000 square miles in the great Central Valley of California. It provides an extension of free, publicly-supported education for two years beyond high school. The college affords the youth and adults of the area an opportunity to prepare for careers in vocational, technical, preprofessional, and other fields."

Organized in 1921, Modesto Junior College was the first public junior college established under the act of the California State Legislature providing for district or community junior colleges. Earlier, however, junior college classes had been offered by certain unified or high school districts and it is generally conceded that the first junior college program in California was offered in Fresno which, like Modesto, is an urban center for a very rich agricultural area in the San Joaquin Valley and like Modesto whose whole economy is geared around the production of food and fiber. The reason for establishing the early California junior colleges in rural centers such as Fresno and Modesto is perfectly simple. Parents in rural areas wanted their sons and daughters to have the benefit of collegiate-level education without having to incur the expense of sending them away from home to attend the State colleges and university centers which tended to be

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located in the cities of California. The junior or community college, thus, from its very inception, at least in California, was particularly designed to serve the higher education needs of rural youth.

Particularly during its first two decades, the curriculum of Modesto Junior College tended to emphasize solely the transfer function, or the preparation of students to move on to the four-year colleges and universities as third-year students. The intent was to establish a lower division curriculum which was virtually undistinguishable, except possibly in number of offerings, from the lower divisions at the university and State colleges. Indeed it was the hope that with smaller classes and with a faculty that was concerned solely with classroom teaching rather than research and publication it might be possible to offer lower division preparation which was superior to that offered at the senior institutions. Although the matter of judging the effectiveness of a college program is a very complex and subtle business, the academic success of graduates of Modesto Junior College and other California junior colleges at the transfer institutions suggests that certainly at least equality of quality has been attained and in many cases superiority of junior college preparation has been established.

Although maintaining its emphasis on transfer programs of high academic quality, after World War II particular attention was devoted at Modesto Junior College to expanding offerings in the two year terminal and vocational-technical areas. I think it can be fairly said that transfer and terminal education are equally valued by board, administration, faculty and community, and indeed, in terms of per student cost, more tends to be spent on the terminal programs than is spent for the transfer program.

I will provide only a partial illustrative list of occupational programs presently available at Modesto Junior College. Among these are numbered: registered and practical nursing, teacher aides, police science, fire science, correctional science, auto body and mechanics, electronics technology, industrial technology, radio and television repairing, machine technology, engineering technology, printing, fashion merchandising, school lunch management, dental assisting, drafting technology, business data processing, general secretarial and medical typist-receptionist. In the Agriculture Department alone at Modesto Junior College there are 17 occupational programs including: ornamental horticulture, poultry husbandry, recreational land management, fluid power technician, nursery production technician, quality control and inspection technician and artificial insemination technician.

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We have mentioned two primary missions of the California junior colleges, i.e., transfer and occupational education. There is a third function which cuts across the other two and which is looming ever greater in importance.

This is the function we call "community or adult" education. As an illustration of the impact of this responsibility, may I point out that there are enrolled at Modesto Junior College this fall about 4,000 full-time students. There are, however, about 12,000 part-time and evening students in attendance. The part-time students almost all of whom attend in the evening are enrolled in both transfer and occupational programs either planning to work toward the baccalaureate, upgrade themselves occupationally, or simply seeking to enrich their cultural and intellectual lives. A number of workshops, seminars and short courses with or without credit are offered only in the evening to satisfy special group interests in such fields as real estate, insurance, farm tax problems, etc.

Additionally, Modesto Junior College administers an adult high school and an adult elementary school. In the last several years, one out of five high school diplomas awarded each year in Modesto has been earned by an adult student through the junior college.

Of particular interest to the participants in this conference I think will be a special federally-funded project carried on by Modesto Junior College designed to better the lot of unemployed and under-employed adults.

About five years ago, the staff of our Adult Division became aware that out of certain geographical areas in our junior college district only a very few students were coming to the college. An examination of census tract data in these areas and then of the district as a whole revealed some rather startling statistics which we had been aware of only vaguely on a rather impressionistic basis before we examined the data. We discovered that about 10 percent of people over 25 in our district had less than a third-grade education -- were, in fact, functional illiterates. Further a majority of our adult citizens had barely gone beyond the eighth grade. Now, these were not ethnic or racial minority groups. They were native-born and impeccably white, Anglo-Saxon Protestants. They were mostly born in Oklahoma, Arkansas, and Texas and had come over the Sierras during the dust-bowl days and afterward settled in California's agricultural valleys and picked fruit, chopped cotton and eviscerated turkeys. Mechanization of agriculture had caught them with their skills down and many were subsisting on welfare or what they could make during brief cannery runs in the fall and winter. We also did some checking and discovered we were spending more on welfare and allied costs in Stanislaus County than we were on education.

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Our Board of Trustees agreed that if we could find the money we should mount an intensive program of basic education and vocational training to assist these people. Thus, innocently started what I regard the most extraordinary period in my life -- trying to pry money out of Washington from programs which were designed expressly to help people like our Okies and Arkies. One vignette will typify some of our difficulties. A regional Federal field representative was in my office on the phone to his superior in Washington trying to explain our situation in Modesto and why we needed the money. His superior kept pressing him on whether there would be any minority groups involved in the program. The field man admitted there were so few Negroes in the district that this could not be considered a program to assist this group. What about Mexican-Americans? There are a few Spanish-surname people in the district but they were mostly old California Spanish and for the most part, comfortable middle class people. Finally in exasperation the field man shouted over the line, "Look the president of the college is named Garcia! If he's willing to agree that he's a member of a minority, can't we count him in?" I was, of course, perfectly agreeable and perhaps as a result we got the grant through the Area Redevelopment Agency and the Manpower Development and Training Act.

Over a period of three years we trained more than a thousand adults, most of them on welfare when they began taking them through a basic education school which the students themselves named "New Hope" and into a variety of vocational training programs.

I will not take the time to discuss the remarkable savings of human talent and dignity as a result of the New Hope program, I will not attempt to describe the extraordinary change in the lives of these people and their families when it became possible for them to fully participate in the life of 20th century America, I will content myself by pointing out that our research staff conservatively estimated that the return on an investment of $337,692 during the 1965-66 year as an example in the form of educational costs and welfare payments returned in the first year after training a dividend in excess of $100,000 in earnings and savings. Every subsequent year these graduates remain employed and off welfare; the dividends mount. I regard a return of nearly 30 percent on an investment in the first year pretty fair.

Having attempted to give you some idea of the scope of the program at Modesto Junior College let me now proceed to make some general observations about junior or community colleges, specifically although not exclusively in the rural context.

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1. A community or junior college should be governed as much as possible at the local level, preferably by locally elected trustees. I do not uncritically accept the notions that only local decision-making can be wise and that State or national level direction must of necessity be bureaucratic and stultifying. It simply isn't so and a board or administration in Modesto can be just as fallible as one in Sacramento. But it is the very genius of the community college that it should be responsive to and reflect the flavor of the community or district it serves. Our California junior colleges are characterized by great diversity. I can assure you that the atmosphere, architecture, student body and program of Rio Hondo Junior College are quite different from those at Modesto Junior College because the communities they serve are so different. And this is as it should be.

   Modesto Junior College is governed by a locally elected seven-man Board of Trustees. Occupations of board members include: two druggists, two ranchers, a physician, a telephone company executive and an agri-businessman. They serve without pay, meet two or three evenings a month at regular board meetings and give many additional hours in service to the college.

   They understand the community, the community has confidence in them and has never failed to support the Board when they have asked it for necessary additional funds. In November 1966, the voters approved a $20 million, ten-year building program by a majority as great as Governor Reagan received from the voters of California at the same election.

   Local control, unfortunately, means that the local taxpayer must assume the greater part of the financial burden for the support of the junior college but this the voters of California have been willing to do.

2. A community or junior college should be comprehensive in its offerings. It should not be solely transfer-oriented, nor solely occupationally-oriented. It should not be concerned solely with the eighteen-year-old high school graduate, nor solely with the needs of a forty-year-old rancher.

   A reporter for the "Farm Journal" who wrote an article on Modesto Junior College in the May 1967 issue was apparently most struck by the advantages of having transfer and occupational programs on the same campus. He wrote, "Just think of the embarrassment any student avoids when he can switch careers with no more trouble than moving to another building on the same campus.

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"A joint campus allows obvious savings in teaching staff and buildings. It also gives all students a chance to attend concerts, art exhibits, lectures and the social life that surrounds colleges.

"More important, it blurs or even erases the distinction between professional and technician. There's nothing second-rate about two-year students at Modesto or the other 77 junior colleges in California."

3. We believe in California that community colleges should be tuition free. At Modesto Junior College the only expense for students is the cost of books and an optional modest student body fee. You have no doubt heard about the controversy in our State about the imposition of tuition at the university and State college. Significantly, no one has proposed tuition for junior college students and there seems to be general agreement that at least through the sophomore year free public higher education is an excellent investment.

4. It should be possible for students, we believe, to commute to college, hence saving the costs of living away from home. As a result of this conviction, the Board of Trustees at Modesto is developing a plan to build two additional colleges as sister institutions to Modesto Junior College so that the great majority of students will be close to an attendance center. The site and name of the first of the two new campuses has already been chosen and Columbia Junior College will open in the historic Columbia gold mining country in the Sierra foothills in 1968. I am sure you will be hearing about this rather small, highly innovative institution in the next several years.

5. Finally, we believe that in an era when more and more institutions of higher learning are wanting to take fewer and fewer more highly screened students, that there should still be at least one institution not only willing but anxious to take the "top 100 percent" of high school graduates and to assist them to reach their maximum development. The community or junior college reflects the diversity, the complexity and the richness of contemporary American life. It is not an academic monastery but is in the marketplace, in the fields, in the urban and rural ghettos, attempting to do justice to the wide range of abilities and motivations of all our people. We are not fastidious or precious or tradition-bound but we think we matter. And as forty-six years of Modesto Junior College proves, we can make a hell of an impact in a rural community.